The Unfallen Imago: Speculative Theology and the World Without the Fall

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What would the world be like if the Fall had never occurred? This paper explores that question not as fantasy, but as a serious theological inquiry into God's original design for humanity, creation, and the cosmos. Drawing from Genesis 1–5 and Revelation 21–22, it examines the intentionality behind Eve's creation, the early necessity of intra-family reproduction, and the moral structure of a sinless world. From there, it constructs a speculative vision of civilization without corruption—where labor is joyful, marriage is unbroken, governance is non-coercive, and culture flourishes in harmony with God. The paper engages the theological tradition, particularly Duns Scotus' supralapsarian view of the Incarnation, to argue that Christ would have become incarnate even without sin—not as redeemer, but as the crown of creation. Finally, it contrasts Eden and the New Jerusalem to show that eschatology is not merely restoration, but glorified fulfillment. By imagining the world-that-might-have-been, we more clearly discern the purpose behind the world that is—and the promise of the world to come.

Keywords: Eden, Fall, Imago Dei, speculative theology, Incarnation, Duns Scotus, sinless world, eschatology, creation, Tree of Life, New Jerusalem, Christology, Genesis, Revelation, glorification, anthropology, prelapsarian, theosis, divine intention, moral order. A collaboration with GPT-4o. CC4.0.

Abstract

This paper undertakes a counterfactual theological investigation into the consequences of a world untainted by the Fall, as narrated in Genesis 3. While Christian theology has traditionally focused on the Fall as the beginning of history's redemptive arc, comparatively little attention has been given to the theological imagination of what might have unfolded had humanity remained in obedient communion with God. Drawing closely from Genesis 1–5, the paper begins by examining the creation of Eve not only as a companion for Adam but as a co-participant in God's command to "be fruitful and multiply," arguing that procreation was inherent in divine design from the outset. It then addresses the moral implications of early human reproduction—particularly the necessity of sibling unions—in a world where sin had not yet entered, challenging modern ethical assumptions through the lens of innocence and divine intentionality.

Building on this foundation, the paper develops a speculative account of human civilization had it matured without corruption: labor without toil, sexuality without shame, knowledge without error, and governance without coercion. Rather than idealizing Eden as static perfection, this exploration presents it as the beginning of dynamic human flourishing under God's direct guidance. Finally, the paper draws a theological comparison between this unfallen world and the eschatological promises found in Revelation, especially the vision of the New Jerusalem. By contemplating the path never taken, the paper argues that Christians may gain deeper insight into God's original intent, the gravity of the Fall, and the nature of what is being restored through Christ.

1. Introduction: The Value of Counterfactual Theology

Theological reflection often moves swiftly from Genesis 1 and 2 to Genesis 3, from the creation of the world to the catastrophe of sin. In doing so, it leaves relatively unexplored the fertile ground of what might have been—a world in which the Fall never occurred, a humanity that never rebelled, and a creation that never groaned under the weight of corruption. This paper seeks to inhabit that

unexplored space. It is a thought experiment, but one undertaken not in defiance of doctrine, but in service to deeper understanding. By tracing the shape of a world without the Fall, we may come to see more clearly the nature of the Fall itself, the depth of what was lost, and the logic of what is being restored.

1.1 The Absence of the Fall as Theological Silence

The Bible is remarkably terse about the life of Adam and Eve before their disobedience. A few verses hint at harmony: Adam naming the animals, the couple's nakedness without shame, the shared dominion over creation. Yet the absence of elaborate detail leaves a conceptual silence around prelapsarian existence. Theologically, this silence is often filled with assumptions rather than inquiry. While systematic theologies devote vast space to the consequences of sin and the mechanics of redemption, the unfallen world is treated as little more than a backdrop. This absence invites a question: is the silence an accident of genre and scope, or a sacred restraint intended to stir holy imagination?

1.2 Justifying Speculative Exploration

Speculative theology—when practiced responsibly—serves as a tool of illumination, not of dogmatic invention. Scripture offers glimpses, and reason, aided by tradition, can follow them into new understandings. Exploring the implications of a sinless world is not escapism or revisionism; rather, it is a mode of reverence. To ask what the world might have been like without the Fall is to ask, indirectly, *what was God's intention for creation?* What were the capacities, purposes, and potential trajectories of the human soul, unclouded by rebellion? If theology is ultimately about knowing God, then tracing the contours of His unspoiled design is not only appropriate—it is essential.

1.3 From Eden Lost to Eden Imagined

This paper does not aim to recover Eden in sentimental terms. Rather, it seeks to imagine Eden forward: what would it mean for a sinless humanity to flourish, to build cities, form languages, raise children, explore creation, and deepen intimacy with the Creator? Such a question also presses against linear theology: if history had unfolded differently, would the Incarnation still occur—not to redeem, but to

glorify? Would there be a heavenly city if there were no Fall? And if not, what would replace it?

In short, this is not a study in nostalgia. It is a study in teleology refracted through possibility—in how imagining the world-that-might-have-been can deepen our understanding of the world-that-is, and the world-that-is-to-come. By listening to the silences between Genesis 2 and 3, we seek to rediscover the resonance of God's first words to humankind: to be fruitful, to multiply, and to dwell with Him in the fullness of unbroken life.

2. The Creation of Eve and the Teleology of Procreation

The creation of Eve marks not only the completion of humanity in Genesis but also the activation of its generative potential. Where Adam was formed from the dust of the ground and given the breath of life, Eve was formed from Adam's side, establishing a relational origin rather than a separate creation. The theological and anthropological implications of this act are profound. Eve is not an afterthought or an auxiliary being; she is the answer to God's declaration that "it is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). In her formation, we see not only the resolution of solitude but the beginning of a human story that is communal, embodied, and fundamentally fruitful. To understand Eve's creation is to understand the telos—end or purpose—of humanity: relationship, reproduction, and reflective participation in divine creativity.

2.1 Eve as Companion and Co-Creator

Genesis 2:18–24 emphasizes that Eve is made as a *"helper fit for him"* (Hebrew: *ezer kenegdo*). This phrase does not imply inferiority; in fact, the term *ezer* is used elsewhere in the Old Testament to describe God's help toward Israel. Eve is thus portrayed not as subordinate but as essential—one who stands *in front of* Adam as his equal and counterpart. Her origin from Adam's side, rather than his head or feet, reinforces this interpretation of equality and mutuality.

In this framework, Eve is not only Adam's companion but also his co-creator in the divine project of stewardship and generation. Unlike the animals, whose creation

did not resolve Adam's solitude, Eve introduces a new relational dynamic: one in which love, sexuality, and procreation converge. Together, Adam and Eve embody the image of God in its plurality (Genesis 1:27)—a relational image that reflects unity through diversity, mutual recognition, and generative love.

2.2 Genesis 1:28 and the Divine Command to Multiply

The first words God speaks to the newly created male and female are a blessing and a command:
"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it..." (Genesis 1:28)

This verse, positioned immediately after the creation of both man and woman, reveals that procreation is not incidental but central to God's design. Fruitfulness is not simply a biological function; it is a theological vocation. In this command, we see that reproduction is sacred, not just as a means of perpetuating life, but as a way of extending God's image-bearing presence throughout the world. The earth is to be filled not randomly but purposefully—with beings who mirror God and exercise righteous dominion.

In the unfallen context, this multiplication would have taken place without pain, rivalry, or exploitation. It would have been an act of joy, unity, and participation in God's creative work. The male and female bodies, in this view, are not utilitarian instruments but sacramental forms—designed for love that gives life.

2.3 "One Flesh" as Physical and Spiritual Unity

The climactic verse of Genesis 2 declares:
"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24)

This verse, quoted repeatedly in both Old and New Testaments (e.g., Matthew 19:5, Ephesians 5:31), is rich in meaning. At the most immediate level, "one flesh" refers to sexual union, the consummation of marriage, and the physical bond that results in the creation of new life. But it also points to something more: a spiritual and ontological unity. It is a reuniting of the divided human form—what was once taken from Adam is returned in mutual embrace.

In an unfallen world, this unity would be unbroken, unashamed, and joy-filled. The sexual act would not carry the weight of power dynamics, emotional damage, or alienation. Rather, it would function as a holy expression of love, trust, and divine mirroring. Eve, as co-equal, enters this union not to be dominated or used, but to share in a relationship that models the triune nature of God—distinct persons in perfect unity.

Thus, from the creation of Eve and the command to multiply to the mystery of becoming "one flesh," Scripture presents an integrated vision of human love, sexuality, and procreation as fundamentally good, holy, and teleological—oriented toward communion, creation, and joy. In the unfallen world, these purposes would have unfolded unimpeded, as part of a divine choreography of mutual giving and generational flourishing.

3. Ethics Before the Fall: The Question of Incest

The early chapters of Genesis raise a quiet but potent moral question: *If Adam and Eve were the only human beings created directly by God, how did humanity multiply?* The text provides a direct but theologically unsettling answer—through intra-family reproduction. Genesis 5:4 informs us that Adam had "other sons and daughters," implying that Cain, Seth, and their brothers must have married their sisters, or at the very least, close relatives. In our contemporary moral and legal frameworks, this would constitute incest, a category bound up with psychological harm, genetic risk, and moral taboo. Yet in the world of Genesis 1–5, there is no indication of divine disapproval. To engage this issue is not to scandalize the text but to understand the ethical structure of a sinless world—one in which categories like incest cannot be imported uncritically from a fallen context.

3.1 Genesis 5:4 and the Necessity of Intra-Family Reproduction

Genesis 5:4 states, "The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters." This single line, almost parenthetical, underwrites the entire population of humanity prior to the Flood. There is no mention of God creating other humans outside the Adamic line; the narrative

presumes that all subsequent generations descend from Adam and Eve. Cain, after killing Abel, fears retribution from “whoever finds me,” suggesting a wider community, but the text maintains genealogical unity under Adam.

In this light, intra-family reproduction is not deviance but necessity—indeed, it is obedience to the divine command to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28). Without the moral injury and psychological trauma that characterize incest in a fallen world, these early unions would have been relationally innocent and physically uncorrupted. The absence of inherited sin, genetic disorder, or emotional dysfunction would have rendered such reproduction neither harmful nor illicit. This is not a moral loophole; it is an alternate ethical framework grounded in prelapsarian wholeness.

3.2 Moral Reasoning in a Sinless Context

One of the challenges of reflecting on prelapsarian ethics is that we are fallen creatures attempting to imagine a world without sin. Our moral intuitions are shaped by a context of fear, shame, brokenness, and misuse of power. In this environment, incest is not only wrong—it is often tragic and traumatizing. But in Eden, there is no lust, no domination, no manipulation. Human relationships are governed by trust, mutuality, and transparent love.

Ethics in Eden would not be guided by the avoidance of harm but by the affirmation of divine order. Goodness was not reactive but generative. To act rightly was to align with God's purposes—to fulfill the design embedded in creation. In that light, procreation among siblings was not a violation but a cooperation with divine will. If marriage is a union of “one flesh,” then the marriage of two individuals who shared a common origin in Adam and Eve could still participate in that mystery without shame or contradiction.

This also suggests that moral knowledge, in Eden, was not derived from autonomous reason or legal prescription, but from intimate union with the Creator. Adam and Eve walked with God, not with commandments. The very tree from which they were forbidden to eat—the tree of the knowledge of good and

evil—implies that prior to their disobedience, moral discernment did not come through rule-based awareness, but through relational harmony with divine order.

3.3 Temporality and Ethical Relativism Before the Law

The introduction of law in the biblical narrative comes much later—formally with Moses, and implicitly with the Fall itself, which ushers in alienation and judgment. It is in Leviticus 18 that incest is explicitly forbidden, with detailed prohibitions against marrying or uncovering the nakedness of close kin. These commands are situated within a context of fallen human behavior, designed to prevent abuse, disorder, and the corruption of family structures.

Before the Fall, however, time functions differently—not just chronologically, but morally. In a sinless world, there is no progression from innocence to violation. The category of “taboo” has no referent. Instead, ethical boundaries are embedded in purpose, not in restriction. What was later forbidden was not initially condemned because it did not carry the same consequence or meaning.

This is not to argue for relativism in the modern sense—where moral truths are seen as fluid or culturally constructed—but rather to acknowledge a moral developmental arc within Scripture itself. What is impermissible in one context may be permissible in another, not because God’s nature changes, but because human nature has. The Fall introduces conditions—biological, psychological, and spiritual—that require boundaries previously unnecessary.

Thus, to call early intra-family reproduction "incest" is to misapply a post-Fall moral category to a pre-Fall reality. The ethics of Eden are not ours, because Eden was not ours—it was humanity’s unfallen potential, which can only be glimpsed from the far side of exile. Yet by attempting to understand it, we may begin to see the moral beauty of a world not defined by prohibition, but by purpose fulfilled.

4. Civilization Without Sin: A Constructive Vision

If the Fall had never occurred, human civilization would still have developed—but in radically different ways. The Genesis account of creation presents not a static

paradise, but a dynamic beginning. Humanity was not created to remain in a garden forever but to fill the earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:28)—a mandate of exploration, cultivation, and creativity. Without sin, the trajectory of human history would still involve cities, technologies, language, and culture, but these would have unfolded as harmonious extensions of divine order, not as compensations for alienation or responses to fear. This section seeks to construct a positive vision of what human civilization might have looked like in the absence of sin—not simply as an Edenic snapshot, but as a continuous unfolding of a divinely infused human destiny.

4.1 Labor as Joyful Stewardship

Before the Fall, work was not a curse but a calling. Genesis 2:15 states, *"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it."* This is an assignment of stewardship, not punishment. Adam's labor is presented as part of his identity, not a burden he must bear. After the Fall, by contrast, toil becomes grueling: *"By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread"* (Genesis 3:19).

In a sinless world, labor would retain its original nobility. Work would be infused with joy, creativity, and fruitfulness. There would be no alienation between the worker and the work—no economic oppression, no exploitation of others, no disconnection from the fruits of one's effort. Agricultural labor would be met with receptive soil; artistic labor would be met with beauty; intellectual labor would be met with insight. Collaboration between individuals would be marked by trust, generosity, and mutual upbuilding. In such a world, vocation would be an act of worship, a daily participation in God's sustaining of creation.

4.2 Marriage as Perfect Union

Marriage, instituted before the Fall, was designed as a covenantal unity grounded in love, mutual recognition, and generative purpose. Genesis 2:24 describes this union as becoming "one flesh," a phrase that carries biological, emotional, and spiritual resonance. The introduction of sin distorted this design—introducing domination, mistrust, shame, and the rupture of male-female relationships (Genesis 3:16).

In a world without sin, marriage would function as the purest form of human community. There would be no manipulation, betrayal, or asymmetry in power. Sexuality would be fully integrated into relational wholeness—unashamed, uncommodified, and untainted by objectification or desire for control. Parenting would also be transformed; the pain of childbirth would be absent (Genesis 3:16), and childrearing would unfold within a relational ecosystem of peace and truth.

The harmony of marriage would extend beyond the couple. Families would become the foundation of peaceful societies, not as fortresses against social disorder, but as radiant cells of love, open to the flourishing of others. In this sense, marriage would become a sacrament of the divine image: two in one, reflecting the relational nature of the Godhead.

4.3 Governance Without Coercion

Human civilization implies organization, and organization implies some form of governance. Yet in a sinless world, governance would not require coercion, punishment, or manipulation. There would be no need for armies, police, surveillance, or prisons—because justice would not be reactive but preemptive, embedded in right order and mutual goodwill.

The dominion mandate of Genesis 1:28—"subdue the earth and have dominion"—would be exercised not as domination but as wise, benevolent leadership over creation. Governance would likely emerge from family structures, voluntary councils, or communal discernment—led by wisdom rather than force. The concept of authority itself would be rehabilitated, understood not as control but as servant leadership, modeled after the relational unity of the Trinity.

Without sin, political life would be an arena for the expression of shared purpose, not factional struggle. There would be diversity, but no division; disagreement, but no deceit. Laws, if they existed at all, would serve as reminders of love's order, not as constraints imposed upon rebels. Governance in such a world would not suppress liberty—it would actualize it.

4.4 Culture, Language, and Technology in Harmony with God

Culture is the externalization of the human spirit: language, music, art, architecture, science, and ritual. In a sinless world, culture would emerge not as a buffer against meaninglessness or mortality, but as a celebration of divine beauty. Every human act of making would be an echo of the Creator's own artistry.

Language, uncorrupted by deceit or confusion, would serve its highest purpose: to communicate truth, forge connection, and glorify God. There would be no Babel to fracture speech into unintelligibility (Genesis 11); rather, languages might still diversify, but they would remain mutually intelligible in intent and spirit, preserving both unity and local beauty.

Technology would develop in alignment with divine order—not to dominate nature, but to extend the reach of stewardship. Tools, transportation, medicine, and architecture would serve life, not profit or warfare. There would be no pollution, no ecological degradation, no mechanization of the soul. Science would not wrest secrets from nature through reduction but receive them as revelations of the Logos woven into matter. Art, music, and ritual would not entertain or distract, but would cultivate wonder and communion with God.

In this civilization, every cultural act would be a form of worship—an outward manifestation of inward alignment with truth. Eden would not be preserved in amber; it would be expanded, made into a world teeming not only with life but with meaning. And in that expansion, we glimpse not just what was lost—but what might still be regained.

5. The Human Soul Without Corruption

To imagine a human soul untainted by sin is to engage in a thought experiment of staggering theological importance. The soul, according to classical Christian anthropology, consists of intellect, will, and emotion—faculties which, after the Fall, no longer operate in harmony. The corruption of the soul is not merely moral but structural: the will inclines toward rebellion, the intellect is clouded, and the emotions oscillate between numbness and chaos. The Fall did not destroy the

image of God in humanity, but it fractured its expression. In a world untouched by sin, however, the soul would exist in a state of integrity—each faculty fully itself, and all faculties working in concord. This harmony would manifest in every dimension of life: thought, desire, expression, and community.

5.1 Intellect and Will in Alignment

In fallen humanity, a persistent tension exists between knowing the good and doing it. As Paul writes in Romans 7:19, *"For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing."* This division between intellect and will is a hallmark of postlapsarian existence. The intellect may recognize truth, yet the will resists it; the will may desire the good, yet the mind rationalizes compromise.

In an unfallen state, this dissonance would not exist. The intellect would perceive reality clearly, uninhibited by pride, deception, or cognitive distortion. The will, rather than being autonomous or erratic, would joyfully follow what the intellect apprehended as true and good. Decisions would be characterized by freedom within order—not compelled by law or desire, but chosen through unimpeded rational delight in what is right.

This alignment would not reduce humans to automatons. On the contrary, it would maximize personhood, enabling individuals to choose the good without inner resistance, to deliberate without duplicity, and to act without regret. Ethical choices would not arise from struggle but from clarity and peace. The image of God would be manifest not only in being but in doing, with every action flowing from an integrated soul.

5.2 Emotional Life Without Fear, Shame, or Lust

In Genesis 2:25, the man and woman are described as being "naked and unashamed." This brief but potent verse signals an emotional state radically different from our own. In the unfallen world, emotions do not guard, distort, or accuse. There is no fear of rejection, no shame in vulnerability, no compulsive desire to dominate or possess. Emotional life is transparent and harmonious, directed toward communion rather than defense.

Fear, in a sinless world, would not exist as anxiety or dread. There would be awe—reverence toward God—but no terror or insecurity. Humans would dwell in perfect safety, both physically and relationally, confident in the goodness of others and the trustworthiness of creation.

Shame, the emotional reflex to exposure and inadequacy, would have no referent. Without sin, there would be no failure to hide. Human beings would be free to be fully known, without distortion or pretense, because there would be nothing to conceal. Relationships would flourish in an environment of complete emotional honesty.

Lust, which distorts love into consumption, would be absent. Sexual desire, rather than being tainted by ego or control, would be a pure longing for union and joy. The emotions would respond to beauty and goodness not by grasping but by rejoicing. In this state, love would be the governing affect, not sentimentally but ontologically—woven into the emotional architecture of the soul.

5.3 The Nature of Education and Creativity in an Unfallen World

Education, in a fallen world, is often a struggle against ignorance, pride, forgetfulness, and distraction. It is remedial, even adversarial—a process of instilling knowledge that the soul resists or mishandles. Creativity, too, is often entangled with neurosis, ego, and competition. Artistic genius is romanticized as the product of inner conflict or emotional suffering.

In a sinless world, education would be liberation, not correction. Learning would not be a burden or obligation but a joyful unfolding of latent understanding. The human mind, clear of confusion and pride, would hunger naturally for knowledge—not to dominate, but to delight in the order and mystery of God's creation. Teachers would be guides in wonder, not enforcers of discipline. Knowledge would be relational, integrated, and experiential—transmitted not as static content but as living participation in truth.

Creativity, too, would flourish as an unbroken echo of divine artistry. Every poem, melody, invention, and scientific theory would be a reflection of the Creator's mind, expressed through human co-authorship. Art would not glorify the artist

but the Source; invention would not commodify, but contribute to the common good. There would be no vanity, no plagiarism, no artificial scarcity of recognition. The impulse to make and understand would spring not from emptiness, but from fullness—from the overflow of a soul at peace with itself and its Maker.

Thus, the unfallen soul would be a mirror, a vessel, and a wellspring—a mirror of divine order, a vessel of unbroken love, and a wellspring of wisdom and creativity. Such a soul would not need to be saved, only cultivated. And in imagining it, we do not merely long for Eden—we begin to remember what we were meant to become.

6. Death, Time, and Eternal Expansion

The Fall did not simply introduce moral disorder into human life; it also introduced ontological rupture. Chief among the consequences was death—physical, spiritual, and relational. Genesis 3:19 declares to Adam, *"For dust you are, and to dust you shall return,"* confirming that mortality was not part of the original design but a consequence of disobedience. In a sinless world, human beings would not die, age into decay, or fall into existential despair. Yet the question remains: what would eternal life on Earth actually mean? Would time lose its meaning? Would civilization stagnate in an eternal present? Or could immortality open the door to a profound eternal expansion, in which humanity continues to unfold the richness of its nature and its cosmos in perfect harmony with God?

6.1 Immortality and the Idea of Fulfillment

In Christian theology, immortality is not simply the absence of death, but the presence of unceasing life—a life that is not static but continually deepening in relationship with God, others, and creation. In Eden, Adam and Eve were created not merely to live forever, but to grow into fullness. The tree of life, mentioned in Genesis 2 and revisited in Revelation 22, represents not mere biological extension, but sustained communion with God—the source of all vitality.

Without sin, human beings would not face decline, disease, or entropy. But this does not mean that they would be frozen in youth or in sameness. Fulfillment in

an unfallen world would likely involve layers of development: intellectual growth, emotional maturity, spiritual deepening, and cultural enrichment. Love, knowledge, and beauty are all infinite in their depths; in a sinless world, humanity would have unlimited time to explore them.

This concept of immortal fulfillment undermines the fear that eternity must be monotonous. Instead, it suggests that death was not the end that gave life meaning, but the tragedy that interrupted an unfolding fullness that was meant to deepen forever. Life without death is not less meaningful—it is more meaningful, because it is no longer threatened by finality.

6.2 Would Time Still Matter Without Sin?

Time, in Scripture, is not condemned as part of the curse. In fact, the rhythm of time—day and night, seasons, Sabbath rest—is part of the creation order itself (Genesis 1:14–19). What changes with the Fall is not time, but how we experience it. Fallen time is anxious: it brings deadlines, decay, and death. We measure time because we fear its end.

In an unfallen world, time would still exist, but as a rhythm of growth, not a countdown to collapse. Time would be liturgical, not mechanical—marked by celebration, harvest, rest, and new beginnings. Rather than binding the human spirit, time would provide the canvas on which love, wisdom, and creativity could be expressed in sequence. The past would not haunt, the future would not threaten, and the present would not suffocate. Each moment would be received in peace, a gift unshadowed by regret or fear.

Time, then, would be the frame of eternal life, not its limit. Human relationships would be enriched by shared history, but never corrupted by bitterness. Knowledge would be cumulative, but never corrupted by pride. The human story would unfold without tragedy, guided by purpose and framed by wonder.

6.3 Cosmic Eden: Would Humanity Spread to the Stars?

If humanity had remained in right relationship with God and creation, the command to “fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28) would eventually reach its terrestrial limit. What then? Would humanity simply maintain a perfect society

in a bounded space? Or would the drive to explore, build, and discover continue beyond Earth? Theologically speaking, there is no reason to suppose that the Edenic command to cultivate creation ends at the edge of Earth's atmosphere.

The image of a Cosmic Eden is not science fiction dressed in theology—it is a natural extension of the dominion mandate in a universe without sin. Without war, greed, or environmental exploitation, exploration would be motivated by reverence and wonder, not conquest or resource extraction. Technology, purified of idolatry, would be a sacrament of stewardship. Human settlements beyond Earth would reflect the peace of Eden, not the fragmentation of Babel.

Moreover, the expansion of humanity across the cosmos would allow for the expansion of love, knowledge, and worship. Each new world would be another canvas upon which the image of God is imprinted, another stage for the liturgy of life. Stars and galaxies, rather than being hostile voids, would be discovered as vistas of glory, each bearing secrets placed there for joyful discovery.

This vision resonates with the eschatological language of Isaiah and Revelation, where the new heavens and new earth are not merely a return to Eden but its glorification. If the Fall had never occurred, perhaps that glorification would have come from within history, rather than after its collapse. In such a world, the human story would not culminate in a rescue mission but in a cosmic coronation—a humanity crowned with glory, expanding without fear, and praising without end.

In this light, Eden was never meant to be a final destination. It was the first garden in a universe of gardens, and had we not turned away, we might still be walking outward toward stars prepared for our joy.

7. Christ in a Sinless World: Incarnation Without Redemption?

One of the most profound theological questions arising from a speculation about an unfallen world is whether the Incarnation—God becoming flesh in the person of Jesus Christ—would still have occurred had sin never entered the human story. For many Christians, the Incarnation is synonymous with redemption: Christ

became human in order to die for our sins, rise again, and restore what was lost in Adam. But if there were no Fall, would there still be a need for Christ to come? Or was the Incarnation always intended, regardless of human rebellion? This section examines the theological case for a non-redemptive Incarnation, drawing on Scripture, the speculative insights of Duns Scotus, and the larger vision of Christ not as rescuer of a broken world but as the fulfillment of creation's purpose.

7.1 Would the Logos Still Have Become Flesh?

In the Gospel of John, the Incarnation is described in strikingly cosmic terms: *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us"* (John 1:14). This "Word" (*Logos*) is not presented as a reaction to sin but as the eternal principle by which all things were made: *"All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made"* (John 1:3). The Logos is thus ontologically prior to the Fall, and creation itself is already a Christocentric act.

This raises the possibility that the Incarnation was not merely remedial, but teleological—the goal of creation, not just its repair. If humanity had never sinned, the coming of Christ could still be understood as the culmination of God's desire to dwell with His creation, to bring finite creatures into direct, embodied union with the infinite. Rather than atoning for sin, Christ would have inaugurated the full communion between Creator and creature that Eden only foreshadowed.

Such a Christ would still be the Way, the Truth, and the Life—not because He rescues us from death, but because He leads us into the fullness of life that even an unfallen Adam could not achieve on his own.

7.2 Duns Scotus and the Supralapsarian Incarnation

The 13th-century Franciscan theologian John Duns Scotus offered one of the most compelling arguments for what later came to be called the "supralapsarian view" of the Incarnation—meaning that the Incarnation was intended *before* and *regardless of* the Fall. Scotus famously asked: *"Would God not have become incarnate if Adam had not sinned?"* His answer was unequivocal: Yes, He would have. The Incarnation, according to Scotus, was the greatest possible expression

of God's love and glory, and God always acts for the highest good. Therefore, even without sin, the Word would have become flesh.

For Scotus, the Incarnation is the logical and metaphysical center of creation, not a contingency plan. Christ is not primarily the second Adam who undoes the first, but the first intention of God for creation. All things were created through Him and for Him (Colossians 1:16–17), and humanity was destined not merely for innocence but for participation in divine glory, a union made possible only through the Incarnate Logos.

In this framework, the Fall becomes a tragic detour, not the reason for the journey. The coming of Christ is not merely about saving humanity from death, but about lifting humanity into the eternal dance of divine love that preexisted time.

7.3 Christ as the Crown of Creation Rather Than Its Redeemer

In a sinless world, Christ would not have come as Redeemer, but as Crown. He would still be the perfect image of the invisible God, the archetype of humanity, and the embodied union of divine and human natures. But instead of dying on a cross, He might have come to teach, to elevate, and to transfigure—to lead humanity not from ruin to restoration, but from goodness to glory.

This Christ would still be Emmanuel, “God with us,” but His presence would not be a remedy. It would be a consummation. He would fulfill the desires of the human heart—not to be rescued from guilt, but to be united with infinite beauty, wisdom, and love. Worship of Him would arise not from forgiveness received, but from majesty revealed. His Incarnation would still involve humility—God stooping to enter time and space—but it would be a humility that raises creation, not one required to repair it.

In such a vision, the Eucharist might still have existed—not as the memorial of a sacrificial death, but as the celebration of divine-human union. The sacraments would still transmit grace, but not as medicine for sin; rather, as nutrients for divine growth. The Church would still exist, but as a festival of glory, not a hospital for the broken.

Thus, imagining Christ in an unfallen world challenges us to reconsider the depth of His identity. He is not merely the Lamb slain because of sin, but the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8)—suggesting that His role in creation is not reactive but eternal. Even in a world that never fell, the Word would have become flesh—not to fix what was lost, but to complete what was always intended.

8. The Eschatological Mirror: Eden and Revelation

The relationship between Genesis and Revelation has long fascinated theologians and mystics alike. The first and last books of the Bible form a kind of literary and theological inclusio, a structure where the end mirrors the beginning—but with crucial differences. Genesis begins in a garden; Revelation ends in a city. Genesis introduces the Tree of Life; Revelation restores it. Genesis shows the rupture of human communion with God; Revelation portrays its perfect consummation. This closing arc of Scripture is not merely a reversal of damage but a transfiguration of the original creation into something even more radiant. In this sense, the eschatological vision is not only the repair of Eden, but its glorified mirror—not just the recovery of innocence, but the arrival at eternal maturity.

8.1 The Tree of Life in Genesis and in Revelation 22

The Tree of Life appears first in Genesis 2:9, planted in the midst of Eden alongside the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It represents more than biological immortality; it signifies continual access to divine life, an unending participation in God's sustaining presence. After the Fall, access to the Tree of Life is barred (Genesis 3:24), not as an act of cruelty, but to prevent immortalizing the condition of sin. Humanity is exiled from the tree not to destroy it, but to delay its restoration until redemption.

In Revelation 22:1–2, the Tree of Life reappears at the center of the New Jerusalem, straddling the river of life that flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. Its leaves are "for the healing of the nations," and it bears fruit continually, each month. This Tree is no longer hidden or guarded—it is fully accessible,

abundant, and universal. No longer located in a secluded garden, it now stands at the heart of the eschatological city, offering healing, nourishment, and eternal life to all.

Theologically, the Tree of Life serves as a symbolic axis: it connects Eden to the New Creation, and prelapsarian harmony to eschatological glory. In a world without the Fall, the Tree of Life would likely have remained central, its fruit sustaining humanity in eternal growth. But in a fallen world, it becomes a symbol of deferred hope—until, in Revelation, it becomes the sign of hope fulfilled.

8.2 Differences Between Eden and the New Jerusalem

While Eden and the New Jerusalem share many resonances—peace, beauty, divine presence, the Tree of Life—they are not the same. Eden is natural, intimate, and enclosed—a garden for two who represent all. The New Jerusalem is architectural, communal, and cosmic—a city whose gates are never shut, whose dimensions stretch beyond imagination, and whose light comes not from the sun but from the glory of God (Revelation 21:23).

In Eden, God walks with humans in the cool of the day; in the New Jerusalem, *"the dwelling place of God is with man"* (Revelation 21:3)—a permanent, unveiled presence. In Eden, humanity is immature, at the beginning of a journey. In the New Jerusalem, the redeemed are transfigured, not merely restored—they are given glorified bodies, they reign with Christ, and they see God "face to face" (Revelation 22:4).

Moreover, Eden is unpopulated except by Adam, Eve, and creation's archetypes. The New Jerusalem is filled with people "from every nation, tribe, and tongue" (Revelation 7:9), a fully inclusive and diverse communion of saints. This reflects a shift from particularity to universality, from initial solitude to communal fulfillment.

Thus, while Eden and the New Jerusalem mirror one another, the latter surpasses the former—not merely a return to innocence, but the arrival at a perfected destiny.

8.3 Restoration or Glorified Fulfillment?

The crucial theological question is this: does Revelation depict a restoration of Eden, or something greater? Is eschatology a return to the beginning, or the realization of a destiny that was always more than what was originally present?

Scripture seems to suggest the latter. The New Heaven and New Earth are not just Eden 2.0; they are the final manifestation of God's eternal plan. If Eden was the seed, then the New Jerusalem is the fully blossomed tree. What was implicit in Genesis becomes explicit in Revelation. What was fragile becomes unshakeable. What was threatened becomes triumphant.

Even in a sinless world, Adam and Eve would likely have grown toward union with God—but that trajectory would have culminated in glorification, not just continuation. The Fall did not invent the idea of glory; it interrupted it. Redemption in Christ is not merely a repair—it is the completion of what Eden gestured toward: the marriage of heaven and earth, the union of Creator and creation, the eternal liturgy of love that no serpent, death, or sorrow can ever invade again.

In this view, the eschaton is not a divine reset, but a divine transfiguration. It shows us what the world might have become even without sin—and more. It gives us not just Eden restored, but Eden fulfilled, infused with the glory of the Lamb, whose presence was not merely reactive to sin, but eternally purposed as the heart of creation itself.

9. Conclusion: Remembering What Was Never Lost

To imagine a world without the Fall is not to indulge in utopian fantasy or theological nostalgia. Rather, it is to reach back through the smoke of history toward a primordial light—a vision of creation not as it is, but as it was meant to be. In this act of holy imagination, Eden is not just a lost garden, but a mirror of human purpose, a lens through which we glimpse what it means to be truly human, and what it means to live in union with God. Though the Fall ruptured the world’s original harmony, it did not erase its meaning. Beneath the scars of

history, the image of that unspoiled world continues to shimmer—awaiting not just our remembrance, but its final consummation in glory.

9.1 The Function of Eden in Theological Imagination

Eden functions as more than a historical prelude; it is a theological archetype. It represents the original blueprint of divine intention—human life in communion with God, creation in balance, and time governed by delight rather than decay. Though Scripture is brief in its description of Eden, its thematic weight is immense. Every subsequent narrative—covenant, exodus, kingdom, exile, redemption—draws its meaning from the Edenic loss it seeks to answer.

Theologically, Eden provides a point of orientation. It reminds us not just of what went wrong, but of what was right. It anchors moral reasoning in original goodness rather than in brokenness. It allows us to ask not merely, "What must be fixed?" but "What was the world made for?" In this way, Eden becomes a constructive force in theology: a symbol of uncorrupted being, unfractured love, and undistorted purpose.

This role of Eden becomes especially potent when placed in conversation with eschatology. Revelation does not take us back to Eden—it moves us forward through it. The vision of the New Jerusalem is not one of pristine stasis but of radiant fulfillment. Eden, therefore, is not a lost paradise so much as a hidden telos—the end that was present in the beginning.

9.2 Re-enchanting the Doctrine of Creation

In a world increasingly disenchanted—where creation is often viewed as raw material, and human beings as accidental consciousness—the Christian vision of a sinless world offers a re-enchantment of existence. To revisit the prelapsarian imagination is to recall that the world was not only made by God but saturated with His presence. The heavens declare His glory, and the earth was formed as a temple in which God and humanity would dwell together.

A theology rooted in Eden calls us to recover a sacramental view of creation—where every tree, river, star, and body reflects divine intention. It reminds us that embodiment is not a flaw but a gift; that sexuality is not shameful but sacred; that

work is not a burden but a vocation; and that time itself is a canvas for eternal meaning.

This perspective has practical consequences. It resists the nihilism of a purely material universe and counters the moral minimalism of a broken world that can only be restrained, not healed. It invites the Church to proclaim not just salvation from sin but participation in divine life—a life that was always meant to be shared.

9.3 From Prelapsarian Speculation to Present Hope

Speculating about a world without sin is not a distraction from redemptive theology but a deepening of it. It enables us to appreciate more fully what Christ restores—not just a lost state, but a lost trajectory. The doctrine of salvation is not merely the forgiveness of sins but the re-initiation of the journey toward glorification, a journey that Adam and Eve never completed.

In this light, Christian hope becomes not only about going to heaven after death, but about becoming fully human—about realizing the image of God that still flickers within us. Eden reminds us that what we long for is not foreign to our nature, but native to it. Our hunger for peace, intimacy, beauty, justice, and communion are not products of evolution or culture—they are echoes of Eden, memories of a world we have never known, but were always meant to inhabit.

As the Church awaits the return of the Lamb and the unveiling of the New Heaven and New Earth, it does so not as a community of escape, but as a people of remembrance and anticipation. In Word, sacrament, creation care, marriage, hospitality, and worship, we rehearse fragments of the world-that-might-have-been—and the world that is yet to come.

Thus, in remembering what was never lost, we prepare to receive what has always been promised. Eden may lie behind us in Scripture, but its fulfillment lies ahead, and it is more real than all our ruins.

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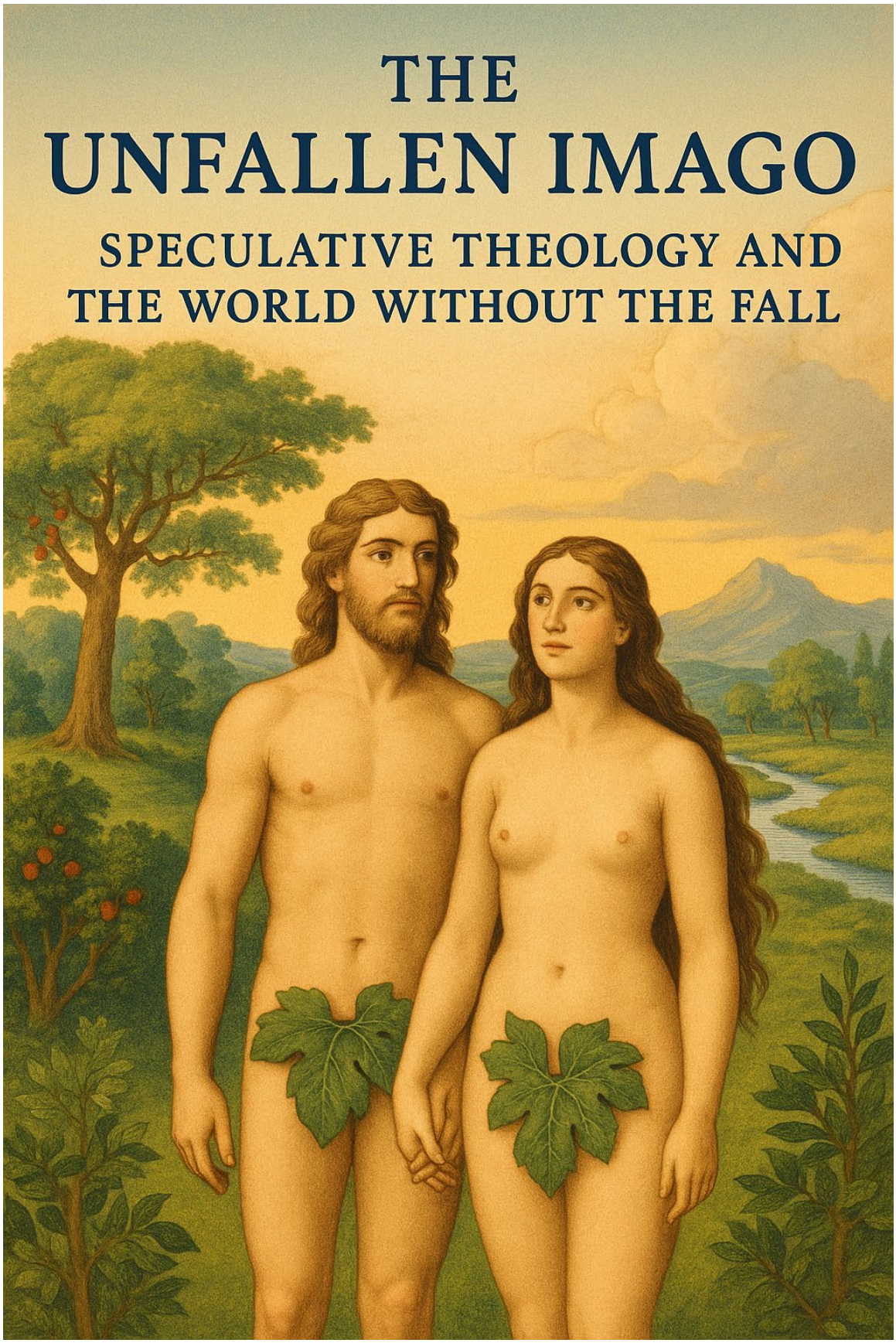
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